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ABSTRACT

A course designed for the reading and understanding of the newspaper is presented. Included in the content are a study of the structure of the newspaper, styles of writing found in newspapers, a detailed study of a story as it unfolds, and writing assignments using different styles of writing. Objectives include the following: (1) The student will recognize the need for newspapers in society; (2) The student will examine the contents of a newspaper; (3) The student will identify news and news style; (4) The student will investigate news interpretation; (5) The student will discern elements of distortion and bias in the news; and (6) The student will evaluate the quality of various newspapers. (Author/CK)

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# AUTHORIZED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE QUINMESTER PROGRAM

DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Language Arts: READING THE NEWSPAPER 5111.25
5112.31
5113.63
5114.119
5115.134
5116.137
5163.01

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# READING THE NEWSPAPER

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Language Arts

Written by Judy H. Houghton

for the

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION

Dade County Public Schools
Miami, Florida

1971

TE 002 886

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Course Number

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Course Title: READING THE NEWSPAPER

Course Description: A unit designed for reading and understanding the newspaper. Activities include a study of the structure of the newspaper, styles of writing found in newspapers, a detailed study of a story as it unfolds, writing assignments using different styles of writing.

I. PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

A. The student will recognize the need for newspapers in society.

B. The student will examine the contents of a newspaper.

C. The student will identify news and news style.

D. The student will investigate news interpretation.

E. The student will discern elements of distortion and bias in the news.

F. The student will evaluate the quality of various newspapers.

II. COURSE CONTENT

The younger generation today is frequently touted as an "aware" generation, informed on more topics than any previous generation. Although there are still many apathetic members of this group, many young people today are so concerned about today's issues that they actively work for changes and solutions to today's problems. This "awareness" of problems and "involvement" in correcting problems on behalf of our young people is encouraging and, at the same time, discouraging.

It is discouraging when information is abused and distorted. It is more discouraging when this faulty information is then swallowed whole by our "aware" youth, who should also be made aware how they can be duped.

Hopefully, this quinmester course will serve not only to extend the awareness level of that apathetic and ill-informed portion of our youth, but also to widen the awareness level of that portion who are misguided and operating fervently on biased information.

The newspaper is vital in news dissemination and students will come to appreciate its function in society as they closely examine its contents. Once the student understands how a newspaper operates, he will come to recognize in what ways the newspaper can distort information, creating false impressions of the way things are.

The end goal of the course is the development of discriminating readers, able to differentiate between fact and opinion, and a well-informed citizenry, able to gauge the significance and importance of news items in our system of priorities.

## III. TEACHING STRATEGIES

A. The student will recognize the need for newspapers in society.

1. Have students read "How Newspapers Began," Chapter 2 of Experiences in Journalism, and "The Newspaper Comes of Age," Chapter 1 in Journalism. Then have students discuss to what extent modern newspapers have been influenced by earlier newspaper style.

2. Have students do library research on how the following figures in history used the American press to further the cause of the new nation: Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, John Peter Zenger, Thomas Jefferson, John Dickenson, and Alexander Hamilton.

3. Show students the film "Mightier Than the Sword" dealing with John Peter Zenger's trial. Have students discuss the newspaper's role and its right to fair comment.

4. Have students do library research for classroom oral presentations on the part each of the following played in the growth of the American newspaper: James Gordon Bennett and the "penny press," Horace Greeley, Joseph Pulitzer, William Randolph Hearst, Walter Winchell, Walter Lippman, Drew Pearson, Louella Parsons, and Henry R. Luce.

5. Have students read pages 36-38 in Journalism entitled "A Newspaper's Functions" and discuss which they think is the most important function.

6. Have students view the film "The Newspaper Serves Its Community" and discuss the contributions our large dailies and smaller community papers have made to Miami.

7. Have students take a current events test covering the news items of the last two weeks in The Miami Herald. (This should effectively demonstrate the needs of the students for information.)

8. Have students view and discuss one or more of the following films for additional information on the newspaper's role in society:

   a. "Assignment Mankind": What goes into the preparation of a daily newspaper? Why should a newspaper gather news in faraway lands? What is the Christian Science Monitor's philosophy regarding its role in society?

b. "Communications in the Modern World": What is the newspaper's role in society compared to other communications media?
c. "That the Public Shall Know": What is the particular part each journalist plays in the production of a newspaper? What attracts people to the field of journalism? What is the stereotype of a reporter?
d. Miami Herald: In what ways is The Miami Herald meeting the needs of its community? (Point out to the students that the Herald now prints The Miami News and The North Dade Journal.
e. "Mass Media: Their Role in a Democracy" (filmstrip): Compare the newspaper's role with those of the other media.

B. The student will examine the contents of newspapers.

1. Have students make a list of all helpful features in one Sunday or Thursday edition of The Miami Herald. Discuss in what ways each article is helpful.

2. Administer to the students the newspaper reading questionnaire on pages 294-295 of Scholastic Journalism. Following this, have students locate in The Miami Herald all of the items listed in the questionnaire.

3. Lecture on the Herald's presentation of material (i.e. where news, sports, editorials, etc. are located). Have students discuss the logic of the paper's organization.

4. Have students skim the paper to find isolated facts. (e.g. What was yesterday's high temperature reading? What is the subject of Sidney Harris' column?)

5. Invite a guest speaker from the Herald or News to explain to the students the necessity for modern make-up and attractive, informative headlines.

6. Lecture about newspaper jargon (i.e. AP, UPI, bylines, masthead, etc.) Have students locate in the Herald examples of each term.

7. Have students view the film "How to Read Newspapers" and discuss the following:

a. How should papers be read in terms of time spent and material read?
b. Why follow news stories as they develop day to day?
c. Why develop critical reading of editorials?

8. Have students examine issues of the various local neighborhood newspapers (Miami Beach Sun, North Dade Journal, The Guide, etc.). What is included in these papers that is absent from the large metropolitan dailies? What is excluded? Why?

C. The student will identify news and news style.

1. Have students compare the style of a news story with that of an Edgar Allen Poe short story. Include a discussion of differing purposes, contents, structures, styles, paragraphs, sentences, words, authors' preparations. (Refer to Chapter 1 in Scholastic Journalism.)

2. Lecture on reader interest factors from Scholastic Journalism, Journalism, or Experiences in Journalism. Have students bring in clippings that feature elements of timeliness, proximity, consequence, oddity, etc.

3. Use page 12 of "Judging for Interest" in Scholastic Journalism as a guide in preparing a test in which students determine which stories in a recent issue of the school paper carry the greatest interest. Have students discuss the reasons for their choices.

4. Have students read "The Inverted Pyramid" pages 103-104 in Journalism. Then have students arrange a list of facts into inverted pyramid form.

5. Have students read "The Newspaper Paragraph," pages 106-110 in Journalism, and rewrite a story which has very long and complex paragraphs, sentences, and words.

6. Have students take five stories off the front page of the Herald and count the number of words in each sentence, sentences in each paragraph, and paragraphs in each story. Have students come up with respective averages.

7. Have students underline all action verbs and circle all being verbs on a front page of a Herald. Follow this with a discussion of the importance of the active voice in interesting a reader.

8. Have students read "Writing the Lead""in either Journalism or Experiences in Journalism. Ask students to bring in clippings which are examples of each type of lead (i.e. who, what, where, when, why, how).

9. Have students locate the five W's and H in each story on a front page of a Herald. Why was a particular W or H featured?

10. Have students keep a week's log of front page leads from the Herald and then determine which of the five W's and H appears to be the most important or interesting.

11. Have students read about transitional devices in either Journalism or Experiences in Journalism and underline transitional devices in a long news story from The Miami Herald.

12. Provide students with a story lacking transitional devices, and have them write appropriate transitions to unify and brighten the story.

D. The student will investigate news interpretation.

1. Have students discuss the following statement: "To read the news without reading comments on the news is not intelligent newspaper reading."

2. Have students select a straight news story that is difficult to understand by itself. Then have students write a paragraph in which they explain why the story is difficult to understand.

3. Have students make a list of the editorial subjects of one issue of the Herald or the News. Opposite each subject have students tell whether or not it is related to a news event on the front page.

4. Have students bring in an example of an editorial and the news story that inspired that editorial. Then have students explain how the editorial interpreted the news.

5. Have students read about the various types of editorials in Journalism and Scholastic Journalism and discuss the differences among them and the characteristics of each type.

6. Have students cut out from the Herald examples of the various types of editorials and explain why each editorial illustrates a particular type.

7. Have students show examples of two editorials, one criticizing and another commending the same event. Have them determine which was more appropriate to the subject.

8. Have students make a list of crusades or campaigns that the Herald and News have conducted in the past year and discuss in what ways the crusade or campaign was beneficial to the community or readers.

9. Have students compile a list of topics that a newspaper could use in a crusade and discuss these in class.

10. Have students compile a notebook of different editorial columns, noting their style and usual choice of topic. In what ways could these columns be considered editorials? How are they different from editorials?

11. Distribute to students an editorial, an editorial column, and an interpretive news story. Have students discuss the ways in which these articles are similar and different.

12. Have students read how an editorial is structured in Experiences in Journalism, Journalism, and Scholastic Journalism. What rules should be followed in the writing of editorials? Why is it inadvisable to "preach" or "talk down" to the reader?

13. Have students examine conclusions of editorials from the local press. Was a specific action noted in the end of these editorials? If not, is the conclusion still effective?

14. Have students keep a notebook of editorials with each part clearly labeled: lead, body, and conclusion. Does the lead catch the reader's attention? Does the body support with evidence the argument? Is the conclusion justifiable?

15. Have each student choose a news story that includes an issue he knows something about. Then have him write a "Letter to the Editor" commenting on that news item.

E. The student will discern elements of distortion and bias in the news.

1. Arrange for someone to enter the classroom at the beginning of the period, while students are still getting settled, and "steal" an item off the teacher's desk. Then have students describe the actual event and the "thief." Comparing the students' observations will show dramatically how "eyewitness" accounts can vary from person to person.

2. Have students view the film "Eye of the Beholder" and discuss the importance of accuracy in the news. Why is it important to include as many "eyewitness" accounts as one can in a news story? How credible is a story with only one eyewitness?

3. Have students read the magazine article "Objectivity and the American Press" or a similar article dealing with news bias (see Bibliography). Have them discuss in class how facts can be distorted and how news cannot always be believed.

4. Read to the class an account of "yellow journalism," the Hearst papers' role in getting the U.S. involved in the Spanish-American War. Then take a poll of students' views on the Vietnam War. Have students discuss to what extent their views are influenced by the facts they have gathered from the news media. Are they sure of the real goings-on?

5. Have students watch a TV news program and jot down thoughts or comments as news items are presented. Have them do the same the next day in class as they read newspaper accounts of the same items. Ask them to compare the ways they were influenced by the coverage of TV and the paper.

6. Have students keep a log of news stories and editorials in the Herald or News regarding the President and his policies. Have them determine whether the paper is pro- or anti-administration and back up their feelings with underlined portions of particular stories.

7. Have students use the amount of coverage in the Herald as a guide to make up a list of the 10 most important Americans nationally and 10 most important people locally. Have them do the same for the News and compare their findings.

8. Have students bring in a story that does not quote its sources or authority, but only implies one. Can the story be believed? How valid is the story?

9. One of the biggest problems of distortion is the process of omission. Explain the importance of reporting the news fully and have students bring in examples of news stories that report only part of the truth. Have them tell why they think only parts of the stories they selected were printed.

10. Have students bring in a news story that appears in the News and does not appear in the Herald (or vice versa). Why did one paper print the story and the other leave it out? Does the omission tell us anything about the newspaper?

11. Have students play the "devil's advocate" with a news story, totally disbelieving what they are told. For every fact they read, have them note an opposite point of view or evidence that would disprove the facts presented.

12. Have students keep a log or chart measuring stories and topics according to frequency, placement or position in the paper, and length. In class, have them discuss what they feel are the most important news items to the Herald and to the News.

13. Have students bring in a story from the front page they consider trivial and unimportant and discuss in class why it was given this prominent position in the paper.

14. Have students keep a log of day-to-day front page stories and from this log determine what topics get the biggest coverage in the daily newspapers.

15. Have students write what they think a story is about strictly from the headline. Then have them compare their accounts with the actual story.

16. Have students bring in two stories -- one that is too long for the subject covered and another too short for the subject. Why was each treated this way? What does this tell about the newspaper's prejudices?

17. Have students bring in an example of a news story created or made up by the newspaper. Is this really news? Does the newspaper have an obligation to find stories?

18. Have students analyze the "Letters to the Editor" section of the newspaper. Is a fair balance evident? Are there any derogatory letters or letters that go against the policy of the paper? In cases where an "Editor's Note" is included, does the comment undermine the effectiveness of the letter?

19. Have students view the films "Propaganda Techniques" and "How to Judge Facts," both dealing with propaganda devices, and have them discuss the characteristics of each device.

20. Have students clip examples of newspaper stories, editorials, or ads in which propaganda is used to create an impression and underline the statements that illustrate each device.

21. Have students examine examples of editorial cartoons, preferably ones that go along with editorials. Have them point out how the artist has used emotional symbols to illustrate the editorial stand of the paper.

22. Have students bring in a copy of a newspaper from the local "underground free press" and compare the editorial comments and news coverage in this paper with that in the Herald or News. Which shows more bias or distortion of the news?

F. The student will evaluate the quality of various newspapers.

1. Have students make a list of all the features in The Miami Herald that are published to entertain readers and discuss the quality of each feature and the reasons for publishing each feature.

2. Set up a panel in which the students discuss whether a newspaper should select its news stories on the basis of importance or reader interest.

3. Have students read "The News Media" in Scholastic Voice (March 1, 1970. Pages 3-10) and determine which of the three newspapers reported most accurately and fairly.

4. Refer students to pages 324 and 325 of Scholastic Journalism, and have them measure the number of column inches of type devoted in one week's edition of The Miami Herald to crime, school news, business, movies, etc. Have students determine the primary emphasis of the paper and if that emphasis is justified.

5. Have students compare the contents of The Miami News, The Miami Herald, and a yellow journalism tabloid. Ask students to discuss the reasons for becoming familiar with a number of good and bad newspapers.

6. Have students rate an editorial in the Herald according to the checklist given on page 119 of Scholastic Journalism and on page 9 of The Living Textbook. Have students compare their ratings with the ratings of other students and then discuss why they evaluated as they did.

7. Have each student keep a notebook of editorials and editorial columns he considers excellent. Have students discuss in class the merits of their choices.

8. Have students compare the handling of a topic by two different editorialists on the same newspaper staff. Which was the better editorial?

9. Lecture on good taste involving libel and obscenity. Then have students discuss why it is important to avoid poor taste in a newspaper.

10. Have students bring in stories which they consider to be in bad taste. Ask them to give reasons for their choices.

11. Have students compare various local neighborhood newspapers and determine which best meets the needs of the community.

12. Have students compare the overall coverage of news in the local neighborhood newspapers with that of the large metropolitan dailies. Which is more valuable, more indispensable to the reader? Which is better written?

13. Have students evaluate each of the following newspapers as to their overall quality:

    a. The New York Times
    b. The National Enquirer
    c. The Miami Herald
    d. One of the small community papers (e.g. The North Dade Journal, The Guide, or The Newsleader).
    e. The Christian Science Monitor
    f. The Miami News
    g. The high school newspaper

## IV. STUDENT RESOURCES

### A. State Adopted Textbooks

Hartman, William. Journalism. River Forest, Illinois: Laidlaw Brothers, 1968.

Mulligan, John and D'Amelio, Dan. Experiences in Journalism. Atlanta, Georgia: Lyons and Carnahan, 1966.

B. Non-state-adopted Supplementary Materials

1. Textbooks

Adams, Julian and Stratton, Kenneth. Press Time. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964.

English, Earl and Hach, Clarence. Scholastic Journalism. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1957.

Miller, Carl G. Modern Journalism. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1955.

Spears, Harold. High School Journalism, 3rd Rev. Ed. New York: Macmillan Company, 1964.

2. Media Resource Films (AV Department, Lindsey Hopkins)

Assignment: Mankind. I.M. Lesser, 28 min. Color. 1-30015.

Communications in the Modern World. Coronet, 11 min. B&W. 1-00836.

Eye of the Beholder. Reynolds, 30 min. B&W. 1-30023.

How to Judge Facts. Coronet, 12 min. B&W. 1-00178.

How to Read Newspapers. Coronet, 10 min. B&W. 1-00133.

Miami Herald. Miami Herald, 22 min. C, B&W. 1-12932.

Mightier Than The Sword. TFC, 20 min. B&W. 1-10156.

Newspaper Serves Its Community. FAC, 13 min. Color. 1-10023.

Propaganda Techniques. Coronet, 10 min. B&W. 1-00308.

That the People Shall Know. Miami Herald, 29 min. B&W. 1-30012.

Filmstrip and record: Mass Media, Their Role in a Democracy. New York Times. (contact Ken Michaels, NE District)

3. Periodicals (March, 1959 to March, 1971)

News: Definition

"Making of News." America, September 3, 1960, p. 591-592.

"Critical Question: What is Legitimate News?" Newsweek, April 30, 1962, p. 60.

"News and the Nation's Security." Reporter, July 6, 1961.
"Meaning of the News." Vital Speeches. May 15, 1962, p. 472-5.
"Management of News." Saturday Review, Feb. 9, 1963, p. 50-1.
"Rebirth of News." National Review, July 28, 1964, p. 636.
"Self Management of the News." Nation, Mar. 30, 1964, p. 309.
"News is Where You Find It." Saturday Review, Mar. 12, 1966.

News Distortion

"Just the Hard Facts: Divorce of Journalism and Judgement." New Republic, April 24, 1961, p. 11-15.
"What News Does the Public Believe?" Saturday Review, three articles: Mar. 10, 1962; Apr. 14, 1962; May 12, 1962.
"Bad Readers--Bad Papers." Time, November 30, 1962, p. 48.
"Belting One Down the Road; Mississippi Press Incites to Violence." Nation, October 6, 1962.
"Newspapers Finally Face a Fact." Saturday Review, May 11, 1963.
"Managers vs Manufacturers of News." America, March 2, 1963.
"Straws of an Ill Wind; Bias in News Presentation," Saturday Review, July 13, 1963.
"Read Your Paper with Scissors." Writer, Jan. 1965, p. 30-31.
"Journalism's Next Assignment: To See Life in its Full Dimensions." Fortune, January, 1967, p. 88.
"On Trusting the News You Read." America, June 3, 1967, p. 804.
"Mask of Objectivity." Nation, June 17, 1968, p. 789-91.
"What's Wrong With Objectivity?" Saturday Review, Oct. 11, 1969.
"Day in the Life: Believer in All He Reads and Hears." National Review, September 8, 1970, p. 933.
****"Objectivity and the American Press." Senior Scholastic, February 2, 1970.

## Newspapers

"What Makes a Really Good Newspaper and Why They are So Rare." Harper's, June, 1962, p. 12+.

"What Makes a Good Newspaper?" Saturday Review, June 9, 1962.

"What is a Good High School Newspaper?" English Journal, January, 1970, p. 119-121.

"One Day in the World's Press." New Republic, December 28, 1959.

"Challenge to New York Papers." America, Sept. 19, 1959, p. 713.

"Press and America's Image Abroad." U.S. News & World Report, December 5, 1960, p. 128-131.

"Fit to Print Twice." Newsweek, May 30, 1960, p. 83.

"Pastorate of the Press." Time, July 18, 1960, p. 40.

"Top U.S. Dailies." Time, January 10, 1964, p. 58-60.

"Pulitzer for Community Service?" Saturday Review, Oct. 9, 1965.

****"The News Media?" Scholastic Voice, Mar. 1, 1970, p. 3-10.

(For more periodical references dealing with newspapers and journalism, see the quinmester entitled "Shaping Opinions")

## V. TEACHER RESOURCES

### A. Textbooks (see listing under Student Resources)

### B. Professional Books


Boutwell, William D., ed. Using Mass Media in the Schools. NCTE. New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1962.

Conner, Berenice G. and Bullington, Ruth E. The Living Textbook, Miami, Fla.: Miami Herald, 1965.

Emery, Edwin; Ault, Phillip H.; and Agee, Warren K. Introduction to Mass Communications, 3rd edition. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1970.

Mott, George Fox, ed. New Survey in Journalism, 4th edition revised. New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc. College Outline Series (paperback), 1958.


### C. Films (see listing under Student Resources)

### D. Periodicals (see listing under Student Resources)